

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 26, 2017

The Honorable Trey Gowdy
Chairman –Committee on Oversight
and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We are writing to express concerns regarding several FY2018 budget proposals singling out federal employees and federal retirees in the name of deficit reduction.

As Members representing significant numbers of federal workers and federal retirees, we have witnessed many of these same proposals already considered and rejected over the past several years. Approximately 30.9% of the federal civilian workforce consists of veterans. Recycling discredited proposals targeting federal workers is disruptive to them, and demoralizing to all middle-class civilian worker families.

This includes thousands of skilled civilian engineers and technicians who directly support the warfighter in the Defense Department, or federal law enforcement personnel working to keep our nation safe against increasing front-line and border threats. These proposals would make it even harder to attract and retain the best and the brightest into the civil service.

Federal employees have already sacrificed. They were subject to a three-year pay freeze from 2011 through 2013, which the CBO estimates will save \$98 billion over ten years. From 2014 through 2016, federal employees received lower Cost-of Living (COLAs) than required by law, saving \$62 billion. Congress has twice increased required employee contributions to the federal retirement programs for another estimated \$21 billion in savings. And in 2013, over 750,000 federal employees were furloughed due to sequestration cuts, which is estimated to have cost federal employees over \$1 billion in lost wages in 2013 alone. In total, these combined shared sacrifices by federal workers have amounted to \$182 billion since 2010.

The President's FY 2018 budget proposal increasing the amount federal employees pay toward their retirement fund would be tantamount to an immediate and permanent 6% pay cut. The proposed budget would also reduce by half a percent the COLA for Civil Service Retirement System beneficiaries, and eliminates any COLAs for current and future federal retirees in the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS). By law, FERS COLAs are already required to be reduced below what is provided under Social Security.


The proposal for future retirement benefit calculation at the average of the highest five years of salary is problematic, and eliminating the supplement for employees who retire before they collect Social Security at age 62 penalizes federal law enforcement officers, firefighters, and air traffic controllers who are forced to retire early due to the physically demanding nature of their jobs.

Our strongest objection is how the proposals break a promise to employees and retirees who have based career planning on longstanding promised benefit calculations. They and their families don't deserve to be treated in this cavalier manner.

No one needs to remind us of the deficit and debt problem our nation faces, but federal employees are an easy political target. In more ways than one, they have already repeatedly given at the office. Therefore, we respectfully request that you reject any further legislative changes to the federal employee retirement system at this time.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,



Rob Bishop
Member of Congress



Tom Cole
Member of Congress



Rob Wittman
Member of Congress



Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress



Brian K. Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Barbara Comstock
Member of Congress



Walter B. Jones
Member of Congress



Frank LoBiondo
Member of Congress



Peter T. King
Member of Congress



Austin Scott
Member of Congress